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Vermont Among Top Performers on National Reading Assessment

MONTPELIER – Reading scores for Vermont students were among the highest in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), released today by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center on Educational Statistics (NCES). Overall, only Massachusetts outperformed Vermont on the fourth-grade test, while no other state outperformed Vermont at the eighth-grade level.

Vermont students were also among the highest achievers in the country when the NAEP mathematics results were released in October 2009. Only Massachusetts and New Hampshire had significantly higher math scores at the fourth-grade level and only Massachusetts had significantly higher math scores at the eighth-grade level.

Nationally, NAEP reading scores at the fourth-grade level were the same as 2007, the last time the assessment was administered. About two-thirds (67 percent) of U.S. fourth-graders scored at or above the NAEP basic level both years. At the eighth-grade level, the percentage of students scoring at or above the basic level increased one percentage point, from 74 percent in 2007 to 75 percent in 2009.

Growth in NAEP reading scores was also nominal in Vermont. In 2009, the percentage of Vermont fourth-graders who scored at or above the basic level on the NAEP Reading Assessment was 75 percent, as compared to 74 percent in 2007. At the eighth grade level, 84 percent of Vermont students scored at or above the basic level in 2007 and 2009.

“It’s always great to see Vermont students leading the country,” said Commissioner Armando Vilaseca. “But I am concerned about the lack of progress from two years ago, particularly for our students from low-income families.”

Poverty-based achievement gaps have been a persistent concern in Vermont, and the current NAEP results show no signs that the gaps in reading are closing. In grade four, 62 percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch¹ (FRL) scored at or above the basic level on the 2009 NAEP Reading assessment, compared to 82 percent of students not eligible for FRL. In grade eight, 73 percent of students eligible for FRL scored at or above the basic level, compared to 88 percent of their non-eligible peers. These results are not significantly different from the gaps noted on the 2007 test.

Vermont students took the NAEP reading exam during the months of January, February and March of 2009. As part of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), all states are required to participate in NAEP assessments in reading and mathematics at grades four and eight, every

¹ The criteria used by NAEP to define poverty.

other year. National and state-to-state comparisons are based on data from public schools only. Results for individual schools or students are not reported. For a complete list of state and national results, visit <http://www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>.

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